

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0228/01 0672235
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 072235Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8596
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7414
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 3859
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2938
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 2460
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1759
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0492
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1752
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3380
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

id: 144928
date: 3/7/2008 22:35
refid: 08QUITO228
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: SECRET
destination: 08QUITO221
header:
VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0228/01 0672235
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 072235Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8596
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7414
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 3859
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2938
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 2460
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1759
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0492
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1752
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3380
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

----- header ends -----

S E C R E T QUITO 000228

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#) [MX](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: ECUADORIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS, FARC CAPTURES, FOL
INVESTIGATION

REF: QUITO 221

Classified By: CDA Jefferson Brown for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

1. (S) SUMMARY. Ecuador's Fourth Division Army Commander Narvaez confirmed on March 4 that he had modestly increased border zone deployments but was operating fairly normally, and that the Division's primary mission was still to pursue the FARC. Five suspected FARC insurgents were captured near the site of the Colombian operation on March 6. Colombian accusations about Correa administration's FARC contacts have caused some within the military to be concerned about possible removal of some military leaders, including Narvaez. Several of the individuals killed in the March 1 attack appear to have been Mexican, including at least one of the survivors currently in a Quito military hospital. 50% of Ecuadorian poll respondents did not agree with the GOE

decision to cut of diplomatic relations with Colombia. The Constituent Assembly is considering calls for an investigation into whether the Manta Forward Operating Location was involved in supporting the Colombian operation. END SUMMARY.

MILITARY UPDATE

¶2. (S) USG representatives have met over the past few days with Brigadier General Fabian Edmundo Narvaez, commander of the Ecuadorian Army's Fourth Division (which includes the area of the Reyes incident). Narvaez has been an aggressive commander, increasing patrols and operations, and very receptive to USG support. He did not appear to have changed his attitude, nor did he demonstrate anger over the GOC's operation against the FARC. He seemed to remain committed to pursuing the FARC. Narvaez confirmed that approximately 150 soldiers from the Fourth Division converged on the site of the Colombian operation in northern Ecuador, some to assess the site and others to look for evidence of other FARC presence. The Ecuadorian Navy sent three corvette warships to the maritime border with Colombia as a show of force.

¶3. (S) The Fourth Division, comprised of 4,500 troops, has relocated its operating headquarters from Coca, Orellana province, to the 24th Special Forces Group in Lago Agrio, Sucumbios province, closer to the border. According to Narvaez, the Fourth Division is pursuing the FARC actively, as it has in a series of concerted operations since last November. Amid recriminations for the GOE's failure to locate and destroy the Reyes camp, some in the military fear that Narvaez will be (unfairly, in his case) made a scapegoat and relieved of his command (note: many believe he is one of the officers whose replacement appeared to be part of the negotiation that Larrea conducted with Reyes, as cited in the post-op captured documents). Other military officers have expressed resentment regarding President Correa's handling of the situation and concern about the Colombian accusations that the Correa administration may replace military leadership as part of negotiations with the FARC.

RECOVERY AND CAPTURE OF FARC

¶4. (C) The Fourth Division relocated the 22 bodies and the three wounded from the FARC camp to Quito on March 3 and 4, the wounded currently in a military hospital. (Two others, including Raul Reyes, were previously removed by the Colombian military.) Ecuadorian leaders, in seeking to build their case against the GOC action in terms of international law and convention, have asserted that some of the bodies reveal shots in the back. Accompanying this argument is criticism that the Colombian forces left wounded individuals behind. Among the three female survivors, Lucia Andrea Morett Alvarez, a Mexican national whose parents came to Quito to visit her on March 6, claimed no ties to the FARC, whereas another, Martha Perez, admitted to the press that she had been a FARC insurgent for one year. No decision has yet been announced about how the GOE intends to handle these detainees, as officials say only that an investigation must first proceed. Minister of Coordination of Internal and External Security Gustavo Larrea claimed publicly on March 7 that five other Mexican nationals were at the FARC camp at the time of the attack, and "may have died." An embassy

source informed that one body already recovered from the site had a Mexican passport and is presumed to be a Mexican national.

¶5. (SBU) On March 6, two additional bodies were discovered approximately 800 meters from the site of the Colombian operation. That same day, the Ecuadorian military captured five presumed FARC members. Minister Larrea announced that "the insurgents were detained in the Chanangue river, that opens into the San Miguel river, a few meters from the Colombian border."

PROTESTS AND PUBLIC OPINION

¶6. (SBU) Demonstrations have taken place in Quito during the week following the Colombian incursion, most passing in front of the Colombian embassy. Most have been limited to just a few hundred; most have been directed against the Colombian action but some have also been against the FARC. On the evening of March 6, approximately 1,200 participants demonstrated peacefully in front of the U.S. embassy, chanting anti-U.S. and anti-Colombian slogans. Ecuadorian authorities prevented a smaller protest group from reaching the U.S. embassy earlier in the day. A larger, government sponsored demonstration is planned for March 13.

¶7. (C) The GOE, seeking to ensure domestic support, organized a large meeting with civil society representatives on March 5, where it made a detailed presentation on the March 1 events. Our contacts in the government and academia have expressed a range of views on the prospects for repairing the rupture. MFA North America DG Santiago Chavez was by far the most optimistic, expressing his (apparently personal) view that things could be patched together over the next few weeks. Professor Grace Jaramillo of the Latin American Social Sciences Faculty (FLACSO) was far more pessimistic; she told us that the determinant whether Ecuador would shift permanently to a position closer to Chavez would be U.S. willingness to condemn Colombia's violation of Ecuadorian sovereignty.

¶8. (C) Many of our contacts, while supporting Correa's position on the incursion, have expressed regret at the break in diplomatic relations with Colombia. For example, NGO Citizen Participation Executive Director Ruth Hidalgo told us it was unfortunate given all that the Ecuadorian and Colombian people have in common. A Cedatos poll found that 50% of respondents did not agree with the break in diplomatic relations. Commentators have noted that Ecuador did not break off relations with Peru even during two wars they fought in the last 20 years. Specifically consular functions have apparently been allowed to continue.

FOL INVESTIGATION BY ASSEMBLY

¶9. (C) Alberto Acosta and other Constituent Assembly leaders have stated that the Assembly's Committee on Sovereignty, International Relations, and Latin American Integration will decide whether to investigate if the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL) was involved in supporting the Colombian attack on March 1 (reftel). The Constituent Assembly sent a letter on March 6 to the FOL Commander requesting information on flights originating from the FOL. The Embassy is working to communicate transparency, stressing that the FOL flight arrival and departure information is available from the Ecuadorian civil aviation agency that mans the Manta airport control tower, as well as through the Ecuadorian liaison officer stationed at JIATF-South. On March 6, thirteen opposition Assembly members visited the FOL and received a full tour and command briefing.

QUITO BOLIVARIAN CONGRESS TIES TO FARC

¶10. (S) There is reason to suspect that some of those in the Raul Reyes camp at the time of the Colombian attack had entered Ecuador to attend the Second Bolivarian Continental Congress in Quito February 24-27. At least two passports recovered from the attack site show that the insurgents entered Ecuador shortly before the Bolivarian Congress. The Bolivarian Congress was also attended by three Basque

Homeland and Freedom (ETA) members from Spain. A video address by Raul Reyes was played at the beginning of the Congress. The FARC helped sponsor and fund the event by paying the \$4,200 deposit on the Culture House, the venue. The Caribbean Bloc Coordinator of the Bolivarian Continental Coordinator, Luciano Marin Arango (aka Ivan Marquez), passed the funds for the Congress through Audrey Millot, a known French FARC affiliate.

¶11. (C) Maria Augusta Calle, President of the sovereignty committee in the Constituent Assembly, signed a petition

along with numerous others requesting the use of the Culture House for the Bolivarian Congress. An article in the March 6 edition of the weekly Vistazo magazine shows photos of Calle with the daughter of Raul Reyes, Lidia Carmenza Devia Collazos, who it said had been living in El Quinche, northeast of Quito. In the article, Calle was quoted as saying she had met many people as a journalist but denying any knowledge of contact with Reyes' daughter.
BROWN

=====CABLE ENDS=====